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Paving the Road to Afghan Prosperity

A USAID build road has lowered transport costs and created greater access to goods for local restaurants and shops



Photo: USAID/AIRP

A new shop owner established his business at kilometer marking 16 of the Keshim-Faizabad Road, Badakhshan Province. He benefits from faster, cheaper transport of goods such as cookies, cold drinks, and batteries.

Road improvements create new business opportunities and business enterprise growth, particularly along the road.

When USAID completed the 103 kilometer Keshim-to-Faizabad Road in December 2010, increased traffic and decreased travel times led to improved trade opportunities along the corridor. Sensing these opportunities, Janatti, a local businessman, established a shop sixteen kilometers from Keshim City about six months before the road was finished. After the road was paved, the shop's customer base swelled.

Today, Janatti keeps his shop open 13 hours a day to serve drivers passing on the road.

The new road also means that the owner's goods are transported faster and with less cost. "Before the new road was completed, it used to take me three hours by donkey to transport the goods from Keshim," said Janatti. "Now, it only takes ten minutes by vehicle." He hires a driver to deliver his goods, travelling to Keshim about once a month to keep his shop stocked.

The shop's variety and inventory have also expanded due to the increased trade the new road has brought. For example, the owner started out selling just cigarettes and soft drinks. Now, he sells cookies, biscuits, and batteries. Recently, he started to sell mobile phone credit cards. Even though the cost of soft drinks has risen, the shop sells more drinks to offset the increase.

Told that a provincial border road will open soon, Janatti anticipates even more traffic and customers. "I hope that my business will get better," he said. "A border road means there will be more traffic and more customers. If competition increases, I am not concerned, as this will make my business better."

As time goes on, the benefits of the rehabilitated Keshim-Faizabad Road will continue to materialize and more businesses will spring up along the corridor. These new businesses are critical in providing services to drivers and local villagers in the province, especially to those who live far away from the main cities.